

2004 King County Comprehensive Plan Update Area Zoning Study

Department of Development and Environmental Services

Study Area: Auburn Lea Hill Urban Separator

Summary

This 164-acre area is designated Urban Separator on the King County Comprehensive Plan Land Use Map. The existing zoning is R-1, Urban Residential – one home per acre.

The proposed land use designation is Urban, 4-12 dwelling units per acre. The proposed zoning is R-4 – Urban Residential, four homes per acre.

There are also 89 acres of publicly owned land (10 acre Auburndale Park and a 79 acre of park/school site) designated as King County Owned Open Space and zoned R-4 which is proposed to be redesignated as Urban Separator and zoned R-1.

This proposed amendment also eliminates several instances of split-parcel land use and zoning designations.

Background

The Countywide Planning Policies call for King County and cities to implement Urban Separators. Different from the Rural Area and Natural Resource Lands, Urban Separators are low-density areas within the Urban Growth Area that create open space corridors, provide a visual contrast to continuous development and reinforce the unique identities of communities. Urban Separators can play a significant role in preserving environmentally sensitive areas and in providing habitat for fish and wildlife. They also provide recreational benefits, such as parks and trails, and meet the Growth Management Act's requirement for greenbelts and open space in the Urban Growth Area.

The study area is within the City of Auburn Potential Annexation Area (PAA). Auburn objected to the Urban Separator designation for 164 acres, believing this area was suitable for higher residential density. There are about 700 other acres of land designated as Urban Separator on Lea Hill that Auburn supports. This issue arose at the Growth Management Planning Council as the Countywide Urban Separator map was proposed to be included to the Countywide Planning Policies. GMPC directed staff from both jurisdictions to develop a mutually acceptable solution.

In October 2004, GMPC considered a modification to the Urban Separator map in the Countywide Planning Policies deleting the 164-acre study area from the Urban Separator and adding 79 acres within the City of Auburn and 89 acres in unincorporated King County to the Urban Separator. While GMPC voted unanimously to approve this amendment to the Countywide Planning Policies, the Motion failed for lack of a quorum. GMPC will consider this issue again in early 2004.

Applicable Countywide Planning Policy:

- LU-27** Urban separators are low-density areas or areas of little development within the Urban Growth Area. Urban separators shall be defined as permanent low-density lands which protect adjacent resource lands, Rural Areas, and environmentally sensitive areas and create open space corridors within and between Urban Areas which provide environmental, visual, recreational and wildlife benefits. Designated urban separators shall not be redesignated in the future (in the 20-year planning cycle) to other urban uses or higher densities. The maintenance of these urban separators is a regional as well as a local concern. Therefore, no modifications should be made to the development regulations governing these areas without King County review and concurrence.

Applicable King County Comprehensive Plan Policies:

- P-118** Urban Separators are corridors of land that define community or municipal identities and boundaries, provide visual breaks in the urban landscape, and link parks and open space within and outside the Urban Growth Area. These urban corridors should include and link parks and other lands that contain significant environmentally sensitive features, provide wildlife habitat or critical resource protection, contain defining physical features, or contain historic resources. The residential density for land so designated should be maintained at one unit per acre, provided that lands that are sending sites under the Transfer of Density Program may transfer density at a rate of at least four units per acre
- P-119** King County should actively pursue designating Urban Separators in the unincorporated area and work with the cities to establish permanent, Urban Separators within the incorporated area that link with and enhance King County's Urban Separator corridors.

Analysis:

The 164-acre study area is designated as a disputed area on the Urban Separator map in the Countywide Planning Policies. The city of Auburn has agreed to designate a 79-acre area as Urban Separator within the nearby city limits. Auburn also agrees to the designation of 89 acres of publicly owned land in unincorporated King County as Urban Separator. The result is an equivalent Urban Separator in terms of size, with the additional benefit of increased residential development potential on 164 acres of Urban unincorporated King County. Elimination of a potential land use disagreement between Auburn and King County should facilitate development and eventual annexation of this area. Several split-property zoning designations have also been eliminated.

In 2004, GMPC will consider this proposed amendment to the Countywide Planning Policies, along with any other proposals that result from the 2004 King County Comprehensive Plan Update.

Conclusion:

The proposed land use map and zoning amendments are consistent with applicable Countywide Planning Policies, King County Comprehensive Plan Policies, and the City of Auburn Comprehensive Plan.

This amendment achieves a separate and important policy goal by reconciling a significant difference between the land use designations of King County and Auburn for an area Auburn is expected to eventually annex

Executive Staff Recommendation:

Amend the land use designation for the 164-acre study area from Greenbelt/Urban Separator to Urban Residential 4-12 homes per acre.

Amend the zoning designation for the study area from R-1, Urban Residential, one home per acre to Urban Residential, four homes per acre.

Amend the land use designation for 10 acre Auburndale Park and the 79-acre park/school site from King County Owned Open Space to Greenbelt/Urban Separator.

Amend the zoning designation for 10 acre Auburndale Park and the 79-acre park/school site from R-4 to R-1.